

VZCZCXRO2265
PP RUEHBC RUEHDA RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #4000 3571143
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 221143Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0968
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS BAGHDAD 004000

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IZ](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: PROGRESS IN ADHAMIYAH

11. (U) This is an EPRT Baghdad reporting cable.

12. (SBU) As many as 1857 families have returned this year to the once strife-torn district of Adhamiyah, according to GOI figures available at the end of November. (Coalition figures differ slightly.) The overwhelming majority of returnees are Shi'a and by far the majority of them have re-occupied family property or otherwise found housing in the district's Sunni-dominated areas. That said, CF elements of late have noticed an uptick in the number of Sunni returnees to Shi'a majority areas. With a few isolated exceptions -- notably a killing and firebombing last summer in the Shi'a Sha'ab area -- this steady stream of returnees has encountered little in the way of violence or trouble beyond the norm of administrative fumbling. Even the administrative problems appear to be few, thanks to the efficient support provided by local government and the ISF. National ministries are playing only a limited role.

13. (SBU) There are several other signs of progress. One of the most important, and celebrated, was the re-opening two weeks ago of a Shi'a-owned restaurant in the heart of Old Adhamiyah, once an epicenter of AQI-inspired violence. The decision to reopen was purely a business one: unlike some of the smaller entrepreneurs in the area, the restaurant owners have not received a cent from either the Coalition or the GOI. Just as encouraging has been the quiet opening of links between Shi'a sheikhs from Sadr City and the group of Sunni sheikhs linked to Old Adhamiyah's paramount leader, Sheikh Azawi.

14. (SBU) Local people are at long last taking the lead in promoting stability. After months of wrangling, the Adhamiyah District Council decided on December 17 to begin meeting at a site in Qahirah, a mixed neighborhood on the border between the Sunni-dominated western and the Shi'a-led eastern area. (Note: The Army canal is the rough boundary between the two areas.) This action will end the increasingly embarrassing situation of meeting at a neutral site -- FOB War Eagle. Other local leaders are working to organize a fun run through the district that starts at the Imam Bridge re-opened in early October. The EPRT provided encouragement and NGO contacts, but minimal material support. The EPRT also is supporting another tangible sign of progress, an effort by the Shi'a Qai Makam, a kindly gentleman from Sha'ab, to launch a soccer league in the western part of the district. If all goes well, a representative of this league will soon be competing for the Adhamiyah Cup against rivals from the east.
CROCKER